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Preston, Novemb. 17. 1646.

The deliberate

RESOLUTION

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Ministers of the Gospel within the

County Palatine of

LANCASTER

With their grounds and Cautions
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ORDINANCES

OF

PARLIAMENT.

LONDON,

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THOMAS SMITH at his shop in Manchester. 1647.

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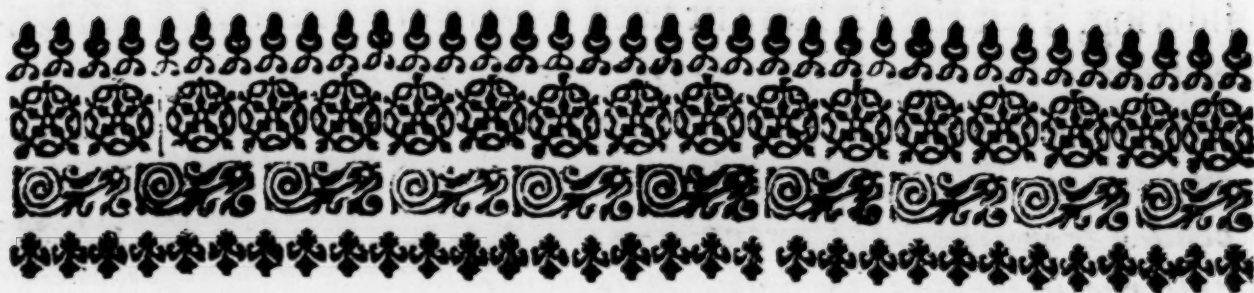
ORDINANCES

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Printed for Luke FAVAR, and are to be sold by
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Preston Novemb. 17. 1646.

The deliberate Resolution of the
Ministers of the Gospel within the County
PALATINE of LANCASTER, &c.



WE Ministers of Christ residing within the County of Lancaster, seriously weighing, How that by the mercifull assistance of God, the Parliament hath removed the book of Common Prayer with all its unnecessary and burdensome Ceremonies, and established the Directory in the room thereof; and hath abolished the Prelaticall Hierarchy by Arch-bishops, Bishops and their Dependents and in stead thereof laid the foundation of a Presbyteri- all Government in every congregation, with subordination to Classicall Provinciall and Nationall Assemblies (that government we apprehend most agreeable the Word of God, and which is practised by the best Reformed Churches, keeping a golden mean betwixt Prelaticall Tyranny, and Popular Anarchy, strengthened by the light of Nature, the most suitable to the civill Government of this Kingdome, a Government that the old godly non-conformists who were in their times Pillars in the Church, and the moderate conscionable conformists, did pray for, con-

tend for, write for, suffer for, and who if they had lived to see what we see, would have sung old Simeons Song, and also considering, That the Parliament hath *inabled the Elderships by their authority to keep away from the Lords Supper all ignorant persons and many scandalous, With a Declaration of their Resolution, that all sorts of notorious scandalous offenders should be suspended from the Sacrament, and likewise authorized the Classicall presbyters to Ordain Ministers within their respective bounds*: (For all which we desire unfeignedly to be thankfull to Almighty God and do hereby testifie our due acknowledgement of the wisdom, zeal, and piety of our Honourable Houses therein;) And when also with sad and bleeding hearts we cannot but observe the lamentable breaches, miserable confusion, disorder and unsettlement under which this poor distressed Church groans, the increase and spreading of all kind of errours, heresies, blasphemies, schism, and prophaneſs, tending to the utter ruin of many thousand souls, and that so flatly contrary to our solemn Covenant, and that the Sacrament of the Lords Supper to the great grief and spirituall damage of the godly hath been much disused for want of a regular and effectuell means to keep back the ignorant and scandalous, and also that sundry Congregations lye waste and desolate for want of Pastors for lack of Ordination being all of them the wofull and sad effects of Ecclesiasticall Anarchy, and that therefore urgent and pressing necessity is incumbent upon every one in their place, to their utmost to endeavour the putting Church-government into execution, that so an effectuell means might be applyed for the healing of this sick Church of her dangerous distempers, the remedying whereof when in any just and lawfull sort it may be obtained, may admit no longer delay :

And whereas we have received the Votes of both Houses of Parliament, approving the division of our County into nine *Classicall presbyteries, and also approving of the Ministers and other persons represented from this County as fit to be of the severall respective Classes, for the better constituting of Elderships*
in

in the particular congregations, and which in this extraordinary case before government be set up we conceive very useful, (and for which we return most humble and hearty thanks to the honorable Houses and take the same as a reall testimony of their favourable and kind acceptance of our County-Petition lately presented to them, being hereby encouraged to hope they also will in due time take the other particulars of that Petition into their consideration) We do conceive it our duty, and accordingly resolve to lay hold on this happy opportunity put into our hands, of beginning *to act in reference to Church government, by congregationall Classicall Provinciall and Nationall Assemblies.*

But yet because having perused all the severall Ordinances of Parliament concerning Church Government, we finde sundry things wanting (to instance onely in excommunication for one particular) which we apprehend necessary, and that we are as yet unsupplied or incompetently furnished with remedy against that which may greatly annoy the Church, and also remain unsatisfied in our consciences concerning the warrantableness of other things established; that we may approve our selves faithfull unto God, justifie our actions before men, and preserve the peace of our own consciences, we have thought it necessary in all humility and faithfulness to declare our resolutions and the grounds we go upon.

As it is that which hath hitherto preserved our fainting spirits in patience under hope, that shortly there would come forth such a compleat form of Church-government and Discipline established by publike authority as would be in every point fully satisfactory, so in this our beginning to enter upon this weighty business, it would have been much more to our comfort and encouragement if our desires herein had been accomplished; yet considering, that many things have hitherto retarded the work of reformation now in hand, and not knowing how long it may be before it be compleated, we do not apprehend we can acquit our selves either, before God or men, therefore to do nothing at all, because we have not every thing yet so full as we could desire,

especially when we also call to remembrance, what it hath pleased the Honourable Houses to declare, *so that it cannot be expected that a present rule in every particular should be settled all at once, but that there wil be need of supplyments and additions and happily also of alterations in some things as experience shal bring to light the necessity thereof:* But rather because wee find several things established in the present Ordinances, agreeable to the Word of God (notwithstanding our non-satisfaction in other particulars) we conceive the discharge of our duty towards God, the edification of our people committed to our charge, the preventing the growth of the spreading mischiefs of the times for want of Church Government, do require of us, that we should for the present put in execution what we apprehend in them correspondent to the rule of Gods Word, and pray and wait on God for the altering of what hereafter we hope may appear to the Parliament to be otherwise, and also for the perfecting of them to an entire model of Church Government, and Discipline in all the parts thereof, when Gods time shal come, and he have fitted us for the receiving so great a mercy.

Here also we do freely acknowledge that it concerns the civil Magistrate to have his conscience satisfied, concerning the lawfulness of all those things to which the Church craves the adding of his civil sanction. And however we beleewe, all the Officers of the Church do hold their Office and Authority immediately from Jesus Christ as Mediator, who when *he ascended on high gave gifts unto men*, and who is the only spiritual King, Governor, and Monarch of the Church, the sole head of all Ecclesiastical Power and Spiritual Jurisdiction; and in whose name, and by whose authority the Church Officers, by way of immediate subordination, exercise their function; And though also with our reverend and godly brethren the Ministers of London and Westminster we hold *that the power of Church censures, and in particular the keeping of ignorant and scandalous persons from the Sacrament of the Lords Supper to be in Church Officers by the wil and appointment of Jesus Christ*; that is, in the Elders that rule and those that labor in the Word and Doctrine: yet we

we do most readily grant that the peaceable freedom of exercise of their office they enjoy from the civil Magistrate, who being Christian and godly as he knows he is in duty bound (being himself also to give an account to God how he hath discharged the duty of his place) so he also will be ready to *assist, maintain, and fortifie, the jurisdiction of the Church* in which respect we have conceived our selves bound in conscience (condemning the contrary practises of our dissenting brethren) patiently to wait upon this Reforming Parliament (who for their assistance in matters of such high concernment have called together a reverend and learned Assembly of godly Divines of both Kingdoms to advise withall) that so Church Government might be set up by their authority.

And as we do take our selves bound to yeeld all due subjection to the civil Power *not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake*; so we hope in the exercise of our office, so to carry our selves, as not only to give no just occasion of offence unto the Magistrate, but also *to enjoy his concurrence with us on all occasions, and to bee countable to him whensoever hee shall call us thereunto*: as also considering the great trust reposed in us by Jesus Christ (to whom, having received our Commission from him, we are to give an account how we have fulfilled our Ministry in every part thereof) we conceive it our duty, and by the grace of God resolve, to make his Word our rule, in all such things as concern the discharge of our Spirituall functions, and shall carefully walk according to these present Ordinances so far as we apprehend them agreeable to the un-erring pattern and (holding our selves by manifold and deep engagements most strictly bound to pray dayly for the Honourable Houses of Parliament, that this great work of Reformation being by them so happily begun, may also by them with the advice of the reverend Assembly of Divines, to the exceeding great rejoycing of all the Churches of God, be as gloriously finished) do most humbly beseech the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of wisdom and might, so to direct, guide, assist, and strengthen

strengthen us by his holy Spirit in this great and weighty undertaking, as may be to the glory of his name, the advancement of the power of godliness, the suppression of errors, schisms, & profaness, the edification, peace, and establishing of the Church, the just and due content of the Christian Magistrate, the peace and comfort of our own souls here, and *that when the chief Shepherd shal appear we may receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

FINIS.
